

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, NO, UR

SUBJECT: LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS

1. NORWAY'S LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN REIULF STEEN REFLECTED ON GENERAL CONDITION OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NORWAY IN A WIDE-RANGING INTERVIEW IN SEPT 6 EDITION OF ARBEIDERBLADET (LABOR). INTER ALIA, HE NOTED THAT CONFLICTING SIGNALS FROM WASHINGTON WERE BEING RECEIVED IN MOSCOW, AND STEEN FELT THE RESULTING MISUNDERSTANDING WAS UNDERMINING DETENTE.

2. DETERIORATION OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN TURN WERE COMPLICATING NORWAY'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE USSR, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO THE NORTHERN REGION, THE CHAIRMAN ADDED. STEEN ALSO GENTLY PRODDED THE USSR OVER RECENT SOVIET LIBERTIES TAKEN IN SVALBARD, THAT IT WAS IN SOVIET

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INTEREST TO SUPPORT NORWAY'S ABILITY TO ENFORCE THE SVALBARD TREATY AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF ALL SIGNATORIES, AND THAT ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE SOVIETS, HAD AN INTEREST IN RELAXING TENSIONS IN THE NORTHERN REGION.

3. STEEN REGARDED DETENTE AS HAVING FALLEN TO LOW ESTATE, AND SUGGESTED THAT SOME RESTORATIVE WORK MIGHT BE DONE BY

A MEETING OF US AND SOVIET LEADERS, TOGETHER WITH A MAJOR EUROPEAN FIGURE LIKE WILLY BRANDT. THE CHAIRMAN, HOWEVER, DID NOT CONSIDER HOLDING SUCH A MEETING VERY LIKELY.

4. STEEN VIEWED RECENT CONTACTS BETWEEN EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS AND PRC LEADERS AS A DANGEROUS FORM OF BAITING THE BEAR OR GETTING AT THE USSR FROM BEHIND. HE CRITICIZED SUCH ACTIVITY AS POSING A SERIOUS THREAT TO EAST-WEST DETENTE AND AS RISKING A RETURN TO THE COLD WAR. HE DID, HOWEVER, RESTATE HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PRC AND THE WEST.

5. THE LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN EXPRESSED BEWILDERMENT OVER WHAT HE REFERRED TO AS A LACK OF A CONSISTENT FOREIGN POLICY OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. HE ADMITTED HIS ORIGINAL HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BUT THE ADMINISTRATION SPEAKS WITH THE CONFLICTING TONGUES OF BRZEZINSKI AND ANDREW YOUNG, WITH THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF SAYING VERY LITTLE, STEEN SAID.

6. COMMENT: THERE WAS NO PARTICULAR OCCASION FOR STEEN'S INTERVIEW A MONTH BEFORE THE RETURN OF THE STORTING, WHERE HE ALSO SERVES AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. STEEN, LIKE MOST NORWEGIAN POLITICIANS, HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF SOVIET SHIP INCURSIONS INTO NORWEGIAN WATERS, AND OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES ON SVALBARD.

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BUT, AS IS USUAL WITH STEEN, HIS SCOPE IN THE FOREIGN AFFIARS FIELD IS QUITE WIDE, AND IT IS USUAL FOR HIM TO VIEW NORTHERN QUESTIONS AS PART OF THE BROADER REALM OF OVERALL EAST-WEST RELATIONS.

7. IN ADDITION TO HIS IMPORTANCE ON THE NORWEGIAN POLITICAL SCENE, STEEN, A BRANDT PROTEGE, IS THE YOUNG ROGUE OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL (SI) WHERE HE HAS LONG BEEN ACTIVE. HIS OCCASIONAL PRONOUNCEMENTS, SUCH AS THE PRESENT ONE, NEED ALWAYS TO BE VIEWED AS ADDRESSED MORE TO THE LARGER INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AUDIENCE THAN TO NORWAY. STEEN, WHO WILL HEAD THE NORWEGIAN DELEGATION TO THIS NOVEMBER'S SI IN VANCOUVER, CAN BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A LARGE PART IN THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY DISCUSSION AT THE GATHERING OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS.

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